

**UNIFIED ARIZONA VETERANS (UAV), P.O. BOX 34338, PHOENIX, AZ 85067**

**MINUTES OF THE UAV GENERAL MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 6, 2012  
AT THE STATE VETERAN HOME, 4141 N. SILVESTRE HERRERA WAY,  
PHOENIX, AZ 85012**

**CALL TO ORDER:** 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Lew Bradley, followed by Invocation by Chaplain Bo Bohach, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENTATION: “Phoenix-Based Veterans Employment Initiative” – Mayor of Phoenix Greg Stanton**

Mayor Stanton reported on several recent events in the Phoenix area including appropriate land use planning around Luke AFB. He commented that sequestration, which goes into effect on January 1, 2013, will lead to the loss of 40,000 jobs. There is a high unemployment rate of 30% for returning veterans to Arizona, compared to the national unemployment rate of 7.8%. Mayor Stanton announced that his aide, Bethany Samaddar, is working with the Phoenix Veterans Commission on the Phoenix Hero Program. A Veteran’s Job Fair is planned for December. Terry Araman of MSVA reported a recent job fair where 3 homeless veterans were hired.

**PRESENTATION: “Veterans Project” - Miss Junior Teen Arizona United States 2012 Maddie Rose Holler**

Maddie Rose Holler is a 14-year-old freshman in high school. Her dad is a Navy retiree with 20 years of service, her brother currently serves on the USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN-74) aircraft carrier. She described projects she has worked on and is working on: Operation Gratitude, a Military Assistance Mission/Dollar Tree Store toys, and Operation Heart whose motto is. “Born with two hearts, one to keep and one to give.”

**PRESENTATION: “Claims Process” – Sandra Flint, Director, VA Regional Office, Phoenix**

Director Flint reported that in October 2009, the Agent Orange court order led to the Dept of Veterans Affairs (VA) re-adjusting 150,000 claims. On August 31, 2010, the VA amended its regulations to add ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's Disease, and hairy-cell leukemias and other chronic B-cell leukemias to the list of diseases presumed to be related to exposure to Agent Orange. A 1983 Court decision, *Nehmer v. Department of Veterans Affairs*, required that when new Agent Orange presumptive conditions are added, claims that were previously denied had to be re-adjudicated. There were approximately 260,000 claims in this category nationwide. The Phoenix office was selected to readjudicate about 6,000 claims from veterans and their survivors.

Between June 2010 and April 2012, 58.4 million dollars were distributed to claimants. This is the amount paid out from the VA Regional Office Phoenix only for the 6,000 Agent Orange cases. Approximately 80,000 Arizona veterans receive compensation and pension benefits amounting to approximately \$75 million monthly. The average claim takes 362 days to process. Claims for the 2010-early 2012 time frame are still being worked.

Questions fielded by Director Flint:

1. What are the VA objectives for processing? Answer: The VA's goal is to process all claims in 125 days with 98% accuracy by 2015. Director Flint is not sure about the number of veterans to be expected. Nationally, over 1 million claims in FY 12 have been processed and have done so for the past 3 years. Each of those years VA has received over a million claims.
2. What about the Camp Lejeune claims? Answer: Veterans who served at the US Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, were potentially exposed to contaminants present in the base water supply prior to 1987. There are still many unanswered questions about the extent of the contamination, the type and duration of the exposure, and the likelihood that contaminant levels were high enough to result in a particular disease. As these questions are being studied, VA has determined that disability claims from veterans who served there deserve special handling to ensure consistency and fairness in the claims processing. As a result, adjudication of these claims has been centralized to the VA Regional Office in Louisville, KY. The VA has a pending inventory of 854,000 claims; 61% of these claims are from veterans and survivors who are already receiving benefits from VA. The Phoenix VA Regional Office has an inventory of 22,000 claims.
3. There is a VA training class regarding the Claims Process. Director Flint provided the following information about the class: the VA has a program called TRIP - Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims which VSOs take as part of their accreditation process. There are 22 lessons and the VSO has to take these lessons within a 45 day period once they begin. Once they complete the training, they must pass a 70-minute test. That test, along with their letters of accreditation from their organization, allows them to access VA systems as they advocate for veterans. This training is available to anyone who wants to take it. If there is enough interest, Director Flint states that she and UAV can probably put something together that would explain the VA claims process with just enough detail to be informative without being overwhelming and not take 2 days.

**September 1, 2012 MINUTES:** Motion to approve by Mel Brody, seconded by Dave Willis. Motion carried.

**TWO TREASURER'S REPORTS presented by Treasurer Jesse Gersten.** Reports are on file with the Secretary.

**SICKNESS AND DISTRESS:** **Chaplain Bohach** reported that Linda Fulkerson had a mild heart attack and has blood clots in her legs and lungs. Carol Long, age 91, had a stroke.

## **REPORTS:**

**1. Congressman Schweikert's Office – Dan Caldwell, Outreach Representative,** reported that with re-districting (new Congressional District 9), constituent services are in flux. The VA in general is not subject to sequestration, however, the VA Administration is. In the area of legislation, Dan commented that the VA Fiduciary process is being discussed in Congress.

(Note: Executive Summary from the Legislative Digest: H.R. 5948, Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012, September 19, 2012 (112<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session)

H.R. 5948 would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to overhaul Chapter 55 of Title 38, which governs VA's fiduciary process, to include stricter background checks on potential fiduciaries, decreased compensation for fiduciaries, and greater deference to fiduciary/Power of Attorney appointments made outside of Title 38.

The bill would also establish a Place of Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery, furnish caskets and urns for deceased veterans with no next of kin, improve communication with VA officials and funeral directors.

The bill would also exclude persons convicted of certain sex offenses from burial at VA National Cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery, and would provide freedom of conscience protection for veterans funerals.

The bill would also extend the authority of the Veterans Benefits Administration to use contract medical examiners, would provide access to case tracking information to certain government employees, and would allow for notifying the Secretary of VA of individuals whose sensitive personal information involved a data breach.

Lastly, the bill would establish a limitation on bonuses for certain VA employees, and would include a sense of Congress regarding the Patriot Guard Riders and Korean War Veterans.)

## **2. Arizona Dept of Veterans' Services: Homer Rodgers representing Director Strickland**

Homer reported Director Strickland away at the MOAA Conference in Camp Verde, and Deputy Director Mike Klier visiting the Hopi Reservation. This year the Arizona Military Family Relief Fund (MFRF) has provided \$463,000 to help 144 military families in need. Total MFRF assistance since 2008 exceeds 1.2 million dollars. The Veteran

Donation Fund has awarded \$33,000 in grants under \$5,000, assisting such organizations as the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Mesa Veterans Day Parade, and other veterans organizations. Another Veteran Donation Fund grant cycle has been announced for requests for grants of \$5,000 dollars and more. All requests for grant proposals of \$5,000 or more must be submitted through the State of Arizona's procurement system at: [www.procure.az.gov](http://www.procure.az.gov). Organizations must first register in ProcureAZ before submitting their grant requests. For information contact Katherine Harding at (602) 234-8415, or email: [LGgrants@azdvs.gov](mailto:LGgrants@azdvs.gov) or 1.800.367.8939 (TDD).

The Tucson Veteran Home has opened a second 30-bed resident wing. Residents currently number 41. A third resident wing is anticipated in early December. There are plans to build a fence between the Home and the VA Medical Center. The project will be funded with \$431,000 Federal dollars remaining in the project. The fence will help with traffic control involving the two facilities.

The Phoenix Veteran Home is in outstanding condition; two million dollars worth of improvements and renovations have been made over the past 5 years. The next major project will be to provide covered parking at the Phoenix Veteran Home.

State Veteran Cemetery, Sierra Vista: Construction on some upgrades began on September 18. Four columbarium walls (2600 niche sites) are being added. An additional \$50,000 in federal VA grants will soon be received to repair and enhance curbing and irrigation lines. All additions and enhancements will cost approximately \$1,700,000. The AZDVS is responsible for 10% of costs which are reimbursable by the Federal govt on completion.

Camp Navajo Project: Notice has been received from the VA that they will fund the construction of a second State Veteran Cemetery on the 60 acres of land being transferred to AZDVS by DEMA and the Army. The transfer awaits completed action by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Veteran Friendly Campuses: AZDVS continues to move forward to spearhead a program to develop and track veteran friendly campuses at Arizona's 3 major universities and the many community colleges across the State. The 3 state universities have established veteran centers since AZDVS has gotten involved. Travis Schulte, AZDVS Staff, is the point of contact for the AZDVS Veteran Friendly Campuses program.

Veterans Outreach: In September and October, Director Strickland and some of his Deputies are meeting with Directors of the VAMCs to discuss issues affecting veterans. In September, Director Strickland met with John Gardner, Director, VAMC Tucson. Director Strickland and his Deputies are scheduled to meet Oct 10 and Oct 13 respectively with the Directors of VAMC Phoenix and Prescott, Sharon Helman and

Donna Jacobs. AZDVS continues to support the Wounded Warrior Program, which in turn, supports various programs for wounded warriors who are now home.

Director Strickland, Deputy Director Barnes and PIO/Legislative Liaison Dave Hampton recently participated in the POW/MIA Observances with Governor Brewer.

On November 7 there will be a State Summit to assist Native American veterans.

### **3. UAV Board of Directors - Chairman Bradley**

Progress Report - Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame: 500 guests are registered for the Induction Ceremony. Dave Willis has volunteered to take photos at the AVHOF Reception and Induction Ceremony.

UAV's Tax Status - Steve Newmark, attorney, affirmed that UAV's incorporation was accomplished several months ago, and UAV is now moving forward to file for 501 (c) (3) status. Motion made by Vice Chair Madden, seconded by Sharon Woods to proceed with the IRS tax status. Motion passed.

Nominations Committee - Chairman Bradley announced that Ron Capek, Judy Hatch, and Bob Skopac have stepped up to serve on the Nominations Committee for the 2013 UAV Board of Directors. The Nominations Committee will present their report at the November 3<sup>rd</sup> UAV Meeting.

**4. UAV Legislative Committee: UAV Legislative Chair Lionel Sanchez** reported he has received 4 nominations, and Representative Heather Carter is recommended as the 2013 Recipient of the UAV Copper Shield/Legislator of the Year Award. The Award Ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday, February 13, 2013 at the Tempe Mission Palms Hotel, 60 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Tempe, AZ 85281.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### **1. Upcoming December 7, 2012 Remember Pearl Harbor Ceremony – Judy Hatch**

The Pearl Harbor Wreath Presenters' form is now available. Judy will forward it to Secretary Culbertson who will in turn forward it to the UAV representatives. The due date to Judy is: Friday, Nov 16<sup>th</sup>. (Note: Form forwarded to UAV representatives on Oct 6, 2013.)

### **NEW BUSINESS/OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**1. February 13, 2013 Copper Sword Award Ceremony – Rick Romley, President, AVHOF Society,** announced that the Recipient of the 2013 Copper Sword Award will be Dr. Michael M. Crow, President of Arizona State University.

## **GOOD OF THE ORDER ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

### **1. Saturday, October 20, several events:**

Expo at Chandler Arts Center (source: Lew Bradley)

Vietnam Veterans Dinner at Wild Horse Pass Hotel

Arizona Veterans Education Foundation (AVEF) Dinner (source: Gene van den Bosch)

**2. Tuesday, October 23, 12:30 pm, free presentation: The Great Escape of December, 1944;** German submariners escape from Camp Papago POW Camp and terrorize Arizona for a month, presented by Lou Linxwiler, official Papago Tracker spokesperson. Optional lunch from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm (source: Carol Culbertson)

**3. Thursday, November 8: Fun Time with no charge to veterans** (source: Ken Barner, Vets for Vets organization, 602.253.0759, not to be confused with the Veterans Furniture Store at 1620 E. McDowell Road in Phoenix)

**4. Monday, November 12: Tempe Beach Park Phase 1 Ribbon Cutting** by Director Strickland (source: David Lucier)

**5. Monday, November 12: The Desert Brass Band Concert** dedicated to Rosie the Riveter, Sunland Memorial Park. Sponsoring organization: Northwest Valley Veterans. (source: George Cushing)

**6. Monday, November 12: Phoenix Veterans Day Parade** (source: [Paula.Pedene@va.gov](mailto:Paula.Pedene@va.gov))

**7. Monday, November 12, 7 pm: Phoenix Suns-Denver Nuggets game** with discount tickets for veterans (source: Laurie Hallam)

**8. Saturday, November 17: Sun Devils vs. Washington State football game** honoring veterans (source: David Lucier)

**9. Friday, November 30: Snowball Express at the Airport** (source: Kathy Upchurch)

**10. Friday, March 8; Saturday, March 9; and Sunday morning, March 10: the 2013 Arizona StandDown at the Veterans Coliseum** due to another organization reserving the Coliseum for the month of February. Art Sloane has red polo shirts available for \$20.00 each, the shirts are a fundraiser for StandDown.

**11. 50/50 Raffle Winner: Lionel Sanchez \$34, UAV Treasury: \$34.00. Lionel donated \$10 of his winnings to the UAV Treasury.**

**Next Meeting: Saturday, November 3, State Veteran Home, Liberty Hall, 10 am to Noon.**

**Closing prayer was given by Chaplain Bohach.**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**/s/CAROL CULBERTSON  
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